

**Wondering what wines to put on your holiday table? We have suggestions for you**

Dave Eckert offers some wine recommendations to light up your holiday table.

By Dave Eckert



The holidays are upon us, and I come bearing wine recommendations. There are so many foods and flavors to contend with during the holidays that it's virtually impossible to hone in on a single variety that will do the trick for pairing with the cuisine you'll encounter between now and the New Year. That in mind, I've broken my picks down into categories to make choosing your holiday wine less stressful and drinking your holiday wine more pleasurable.

#### Sparkling

Nothing sets the tone of a meal or an event better than a glass of bubbles.

Sparkling wines are festive, great with a huge variety of food, welcome at all hours of the day and night, and often surprisingly affordable. Let's start in Italy with Lambrusco, but not your parent's Lambrusco. No, what I'd like to recommend are the Lambrusco offerings of Medici Ermete. Lambrusco comes in varying degrees of sweetness from Secco (dry) to Dolce (sweet). Medici offers delicious versions in all categories from their Quercioli Secco Reggiano to start things off to the I Quercioli Dolce Reggiano for dessert. I am personally a huge fan of the two Medici Lambruscos in the middle, the Solo Reggiano Rosso and the Concerto Reggiano Lambrusco, Medici's flagship wine and the best Lambrusco I've ever tasted. Honestly, try these Lambruscos and you will never think of a Lambrusco the same way again!

Also from Italy, there is an ocean of Prosecco from which to choose. Proseccos are real crowd pleasers — consistently good, widely available, and easy on the pocketbook. Da Luca is a new and tasty find for me.

From France, you can always turn to Champagne, but if you want something less expensive, look for wines from Limoux labeled “Cremant de Limoux” and others from Burgundy labeled “Cremant de Bourgogne.”

Nearly all of these sparklers can be had for under \$30, which leaves more room in the budget for more bubbles—always a good thing.

## White

I’m not a big fan a fan of California Chardonnay, but there are few wines that round out the holiday table or party better than a solid Cali Chard. Try the Imagery Chardonnay from the Imagery Estate Winery in Sonoma County. This offshoot of the famous Benziger label offers great wines and great wine values across the board. Their Chardonnay, which balances oak with ripe tree fruit flavors, is a perfect example of that and a lovely holiday wine addition. Chenin Blanc is a much neglected grape variety that really shines during this time of year. For its pure essence, head to the Loire Valley and pick up a bottle of Vouvray The Les Roches Blanches. At just \$14, this wine is a great place to start. For a real head turner, pop the cork on a bottle of Mulderbosch Chenin Blanc. From South Africa, the Mulderbosch Chenin is a fuller-bodied expression of the grape, but a lovely and balanced one that will complement any dinner table.

## Rosé

I’ve spent a lot of time extolling the virtues of dry rosé, which might just be the most flexible of your holiday wine choices. Solid rosés can now be found the world over, but I still prefer the versions from France.

Two I particularly enjoy are the Rosé d’Anjou from Sauvion and the Rosé de Loire by Château de la Soucherie. Both wines can be purchased for less than \$20.

## Reds

Almost anything goes when it comes to red wine for heartier holiday fare, but I especially like wines from The Rhone Valley and New World versions using Rhone Valley grape varieties. Qupé’s Central Coast Syrah is one such wine. One of my “go to” wines for years, Qupe’s Syrah is both silky and spicy and a great complement to that standing rib roast, or in my house, a beef tenderloin in a garlic cream sauce. If you’d like to try something a little off the beaten path, head to New Zealand and snag a bottle of the The Trinity from Trinity Hill. An intriguing blend of merlot, Tempranillo, Cabernet, Malbec and Syrah. The Trinity is layered with both earthy and fruity aromas and flavors. The wine sings with red meat, and at under \$20, it is quite the bargain. If you just have to have your California cabernet, and I have some friends who fall into that category, then at least select a cab that doesn’t peel the enamel off your teeth. Concannon’s Cabernet Sauvignon is the perfect choice. Responsible for 80 percent of the cab planted in California due to its clones, Concannon has figured out the formula for producing a Cabernet Sauvignon that is balanced and drinkable at a young age — no easy task! Lastly, if you plan on smoking some ribs or brisket this holiday season, you might want to have a bottle or two of zinfandel on hand. Few appellations produce better or more consistent zin than Sonoma County’s Dry Creek Valley. Try the Armida PoiZin, Francis Ford Coppola’s Director’s Cut Zinfandel, or the amazing Bella Winery Lily Hill Zinfandel. You will not be disappointed!

Happy holiday wine drinking everyone!

Dave Eckert is a Kansas City-based food and beverage journalist, a two time Emmy winner, and the producer and host of Culinary Travels with Dave Eckert, which aired on PBS and cable tv for 11 seasons.

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